



## CHAPTER 2

# The Restored Gospel Comes to Iceland



How did the restored gospel come to Iceland? This query cannot be appropriately answered without examining the inspiring story of Guðmundur Guðmundsson, one of Iceland's first converts and Latter-day Saint missionaries.<sup>1</sup> Guðmundur Guðmundsson was born on March 10, 1825, to Guðmundur Benediktsson and Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir on a farm at Ártun, in the Rangárvellir district of the Oddi Parish in Iceland. He was baptized into the Lutheran Church on March 23, 1825, at his home.<sup>2</sup> Guðmundur's parents were faithful, God-fearing people who lived in poverty, which was intensified by having a large family. Guðmundur remembered his parents as "poor but devout and pious; my father especially was very pious and often reminded his children . . . to honor God. . . . We were ten sisters and brothers, and I was the youngest son."<sup>3</sup>

When Guðmundur was ten years old, his parents moved to eastern Landeyjar, an area called Voðmúlastaður in the Rangárvellir district. He was left in the care of his father's dear friend, Magnús Árnasson, a smith at Ártun. There he





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Guðmundur Guðmundsson pictured with his goldsmith tools. He was trained as a goldsmith in Denmark, where he joined the Latter-day Saint Church. *Courtesy of Ralph Abraham Trane, great-grandson of Guðmundur Guðmundsson*





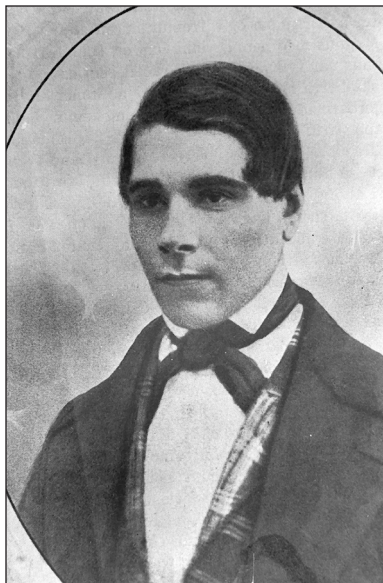
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found companionship with Þórarinn Hafliðason, who became his childhood friend and whom he would later introduce to the restored Church. Together they labored in a companionship as Iceland's first missionaries.<sup>4</sup>

Records indicate that in 1841 Guðmundur received his confirmation during the Trinity Celebration of the Reverend Helgi Þórðarson.<sup>5</sup> At the time of Guðmundur's confirmation, the parish priest recorded that he was "very capable, well-behaved, and very gifted."<sup>6</sup> On May 17, 1842, he moved in with Halldór Þórarson, a relative of Magnús Árnasson who had just died. Guðmundur

spent the next few years learning all he could from his trade master, Halldór Þórarson, after which he went to Copenhagen to study goldsmithing, in approximately 1845. After four years in Copenhagen, he passed the journeyman's exam and then worked for a time in Denmark, at Slagelse in Sjaeland, and for a year in Copenhagen.<sup>7</sup> Concerning his training as a goldsmith, Guðmundur wrote,

When I was 8 years old, I was a brass worker apprentice, and when I had learned this profession, along with becoming a Lutheran through Confirmation, I was encouraged in a curi-



Þórarinn Hafliðason was Guðmundur's childhood friend, and he and Guðmundur were the first two Latter-day Saint missionaries to serve in Iceland. *Courtesy of the Vestmannaeyjar Photo Museum*





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ous manner to travel to Copenhagen to learn the goldsmith profession. . . . My parents were both dead and I felt alone and forsaken in the world. I had only a few acquaintances and hardly any friends, neither had I many possessions. I was finally able to become a goldsmith apprentice for five years with the promise that if I satisfied my master I would get a half year's reduction, which I honestly received and was discharged with a good recommendation.<sup>8</sup>

### *Introduction and Conversion to Mormonism*

Guðmundur relates that the following year he worked as journeyman goldsmith, recounting the following:

In the meantime I lodged with a good friend Thorarin Haflidason, who had recently become a journeyman cabinet maker. His father's brother was my oldest sister's husband. He was the first who talked to me about the wonderful sect called the "Mormons," as he told me that he had been to their meetings and heard them preach and he now wished that I would go and hear them. But I cursed and swore since I knew that it was just nonsense and imagination, and all these disturbing Anabaptists only were religious fanatics. At last, I let myself be convinced to listen to my friend's meek remarks since I knew that what I had said about these people was unfounded because I had not seen a single soul of them or heard their doctrine. Therefore, I promised I would come and hear them, which I did that following Sabbath. . . . Brother Erastus Snow<sup>9</sup> spoke. Even though his preaching was very hard to understand because he still wasn't perfect in the Danish language, his honest face radiated a fatherly love which made a deep impression on me. . . . When I saw these people greet one another with a warmth and affection,





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. . . I was greatly amazed since I had never witnessed [this with] other sects as I had known them. They were also so friendly towards the strangers which came to hear them. I decided right then that I would search their teachings. After their counsel and teaching, I prayed with a sincere heart. . . . I quickly became convinced of the truth and desired baptism. This was during the winter and there was a thick ice on the water. Brother C. Christiansen performed the ordinance of baptism . . . an indescribable bliss went through my entire soul. I was confirmed by the laying on of hands by Erastus Snow, P. [Peter] O. Hansen and others.<sup>10</sup>

About this same time, Guðmundur's childhood friend Þórarinn Hafliðason likewise joined the Church.<sup>11</sup> In the spring of 1851, Erastus Snow ordained Þórarinn a priest and Guðmundur a teacher.<sup>12</sup> According to Elder Snow, Latter-day Saint Apostle and the Scandinavian Mission president, a third Icelander had joined the Church in Copenhagen about this time. In a letter to Elder Franklin D. Richards dated July 10, 1851, Snow noted, "In the spring three Icelanders who had embraced the faith in Copenhagen returned to their native land, with the Book of Mormon and pamphlets, two of whom I ordained and commanded them to labor among their people, as the Lord opened their way."<sup>13</sup>

### *Missionary Labors*

Þórarinn arranged for Guðmundur and himself to go on separate voyages to the Westmann Islands. Þórarinn arrived first, and Guðmundur followed shortly thereafter, arriving on May 12.<sup>14</sup> Guðmundur's reception was quite different from what he had expected; he had anticipated that all Icelanders





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Westmann Island, where some of the early Latter-day Saints congregated. *Courtesy of Byron T. Geslison*

would joyfully receive the glad tidings of the gospel as he had. He reported:

Having found the fruits of the gospel more sweet and desirable than any other fruit, I expected that every person would believe my testimony, especially my own relatives, but alas, when I arrived in Iceland I preached to my brothers and sisters in vain; they would not receive me, and as my pious parents had died, I felt myself left alone, like “Elijah of old in the cave.” However, I soon found a few believing friends, who, notwithstanding strong opposition on the part of the priests, were ready to embrace the truth. I was often rebuked, spit upon and mocked by enemies, but being full of the love of God, I felt no anger or indignation against those who persecuted me.<sup>15</sup>





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The young men began to preach the gospel on the island, but almost immediately the local papers published false reports about “Mormons,” and the religious leaders warned the people not to listen to these missionaries whom they called “false prophets, who had come to deceive their countrymen.”<sup>16</sup> Guðmundsson remembered the following:

Immediately after we set our feet on the land, we noticed that we were not as welcome as we normally would have been if we hadn’t been “Mormons.” Our arrival was already announced over the whole land and . . . lies were made public in the country’s newspapers with warnings and proclamations from the country’s bishops and highest officials. . . . The people were strongly commanded not to receive us or listen to us speak. One of these proclamations was sent especially to the priests and the authorities on Vestman Island. We were then immediately summoned (to court) and were strongly forbidden to spread our teachings.<sup>17</sup>

That Guðmundur had encountered serious difficulties is implied by this letter dated May 31, 1851, in which he appealed to the civil governor of Iceland, Jorgen S. Trampe:

I want, of simpleness of heart to explain for your honor, as the highest authority over the people, my spiritual feelings, by making you aware of the effort now which is taken against my religious teaching, against not only me but also Almighty God and his Son’s Law, and those Lutheran religious teachings which are built upon the Bible and not upon the teachings of man.

I know that I am detestable in the eyes of the world so I now offer only my testimony, believing rather that each and every one of the true believers would find the power to ask God, with a humble heart, to teach them of the truth,





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such spiritual seriousness being necessary, and would soften all, though they literally observe those holy writings which give salvation to each human who seeks God with a humble heart and is the way intended for both small and great.

And you would do well, O Great Leader, to consider that this is not from me only, but of thy God and because of the truth.

I trust in thy high calling to adopt not a course of evil, as I point out, O learned ones, and presume to allow my feelings to come to light, which are without objection according to the will of God. May God work a holy work through you.<sup>18</sup>

However, a few days later the Westmann Islands district sheriff, J. N. Abel, apparently created greater problems for Guðmundsson. On June 3, 1851, Abel also wrote a letter to the governor. Abel discussed the inherent dangers posed by the arrival of the Church to the islands and mentioned Guðmundsson, about whom the sheriff seemed to be uneasy because of Guðmundur's intelligence, eloquence, and character. The sheriff's letter breathes a spirit of concern over the Latter-day Saints' presence:

It is disturbing to know that this unholy teaching, in their book of epistles has gained a solid hold much more quickly than was expected. . . . A goldsmith journeyman, Guðmundur Guðmundsson, came here 12 May and not in poverty, and had with him his faith's dogma translated into Icelandic, so I took measures to lay hold upon the information—in case he worked zealously and received a good following. The result is such that a certain poor man and his wife were re-baptized [from their church to the LDS Church] in the night between 26th and 27th of May. Others who were preparing





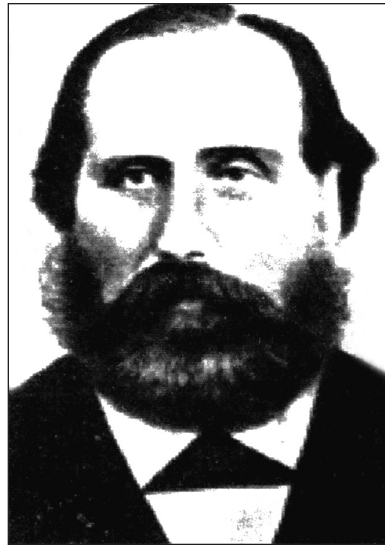


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to be baptized were present at the ceremony and among them Loftur Jónsson, the parish clerk, mediator and member of parliament. . . . I want to now ask you, in your high office—your honor—whether I ought to release him from the board of conciliation and replace him.<sup>19</sup>

The boldness of these first missionaries to Iceland can be ascertained by reading an account written by Þórður Diðriksson, who was then serving with a Lutheran priest on the Westmann Islands:

When I first heard these two Latter Day Saints preach the eternal gospel, I thought they were unnaturally bold, and they set forth so many proofs to establish their faith and principles that no one could withstand them in the Bible. . . . I went three times to their meetings where a foundation of faith was laid in me for my faith. But at the same time I was confused and also frightened that if I accepted this new doctrine I wouldn't be able to stand against all the hate and lies which it met everywhere.<sup>20</sup>



Þórður Diðriksson, pictured above, wrote the first LDS Icelandic missionary tract and helped many fellow Icelanders assimilate into the valley. *Courtesy of Fred L. Dedrickson*





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### *First Converts of the Westmann Islands*

Such boldness created excitement and led to the conversion of several. The missionaries' first converts were Benedikt Hansson and his wife, Ragnhildur Stefánsdóttir, apparently the poor man and his wife noted in Abel's letter. As a result of their preaching and these conversions, the missionaries were summoned to appear before the Westmann Islands local court and were forbidden to preach or to try to obtain any more converts.<sup>21</sup> The sheriff's letter was effective. Now the missionaries had to act with greater caution and instruct interested parties in private. Another blow to the work came when Þórarinn's wife, strongly opposed to her husband's conversion, burned his Mormon literature and, according to Magnús Bjarnasson (whom Þórarinn had introduced to the gospel), she "became desperate and threatened to drown herself." Therefore, Þórarinn ceased to do missionary work.<sup>22</sup>

Ironically, in December of the same year it was not his distraught wife who drowned, but rather Þórarinn himself, in a fishing accident.<sup>23</sup> Guðmundur informed Copenhagen of this tragic event, noting that twenty-four people on the island desired baptism but that no one was authorized to perform the ordinance. When Elder Erastus Snow heard the sad news, he recalled a prompting he had received while ordaining Guðmundur to the office of teacher—that he should also ordain Guðmundur to the office of elder, but "he gave the inspiration no heed, as the young man seemed so enthusiastic, while his companion (Brother Hafliðason) seemed more sedate and thoughtful."<sup>24</sup> Elder Snow now needed to find the right elder to send to Iceland. Peter O. Hansen, who had baptized Guðmundur less than a year earlier, desired to serve as Guðmundur's companion, but he was held back when passport





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officials learned of Hansen's designs. Nearly two years elapsed before an elder was sent.<sup>25</sup>

In the LDS Copenhagen Conference of April 1853, Elder John Lorentzen spoke of the blessings of God upon the Scandinavian people and mentioned Guðmundur Guðmundsson, who had remained faithful in spite of the severe persecutions he had faced alone on a far island. Lorentzen felt that "if it was the will of God the speaker desired to go there (Iceland) to preach the gospel and circulate tracts, . . . he hoped that God would make Iceland a fruitful field for the promulgation of the true work of Christ." Before the meeting came to a close, he was sustained as president of the Icelandic Mission.<sup>26</sup> Guðmundur wrote the following report of Elder Lorentzen's arrival in Iceland:

When John P. Lorensen came to our island in 1853 I received him with an open heart and did all in my power to make his visit among us as pleasant as possible, but he could not do much by way of teaching the natives the principles of the gospel, for the inhabitants of the Westman Islands could not understand Danish. Soon after his arrival we gathered our friends quietly together and we decided that we would proceed in single file by different roads to a certain private place which we had selected in a beautiful little round valley surrounded by nature's own mountain walls. In the midst of this most picturesque valley was found a small grassy plain, as level as a floor and containing something like 20 acres of land. We approached this place one at a time, in order to avoid being noticed by our opponents and persecutors. Here in nature's pure embrace with nothing but the blue canopy of heaven for our covering we raised our hands and our voices 'on high' and prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus to bless and sanctify this lovely spot, surrounded





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by these romantic mountain walls. Then I was ordained an elder under the hands of Johan P. Lorensen according to the instructions which he had received from the president of the Scandinavian mission. We sang hymns, prayed and preached, and I translated Elder Lorensen's words into Icelandic. . . . All those who were present were subsequently baptized.<sup>27</sup>

### *Branch of LDS Church Established*

On June 19, 1853, Elder Lorentzen organized the first branch of the Church on the Westmann Islands, which contained six members and Elder Guðmundsson, who was called as branch president.<sup>28</sup> Lorentzen and Guðmundur labored together another year until Guðmundur returned to Denmark in 1854, after having baptized nine people since the latter's conversion in 1851.<sup>29</sup> Guðmundur wrote of the difficulties he experienced during his mission to his homeland:

After having preached in Iceland from April 1851 until July 1854 for about 3 years and 6 months, and done the best I could, yet there wee but few that received the Gospel; still I believe, there are many that will receive it in [the] future. . . . I have prayed for them in the caves of the mountains, and in private rooms, I have shed tears. . . . The Lord has softened my heart. . . . I remember having praised him when I had to eat the heads of dried fish. . . . I enjoyed that meal, I thanked the Lord, because he provided for me.<sup>30</sup>

Though he planned to immigrate to Zion, Guðmundur decided to first serve a mission in Denmark, spending about eighteen months there as a missionary. While assigned to the city of Kalundborg, he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel and then conscripted into the Danish military. He wrote: "I . . .





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was put in prison, for about 7 weeks, and when they could find no fault with me, except that I had baptized, and had preached the Gospel, I was justified in that respect, but I was charged to serve as a soldier for 4 years in the Danish armee [*sic*]; I was conducted by the police to Copenhagen. . . . I had to put on the military attire, they gave me a big gun, a sabre. . . . I felt dreadful bad, in this position.”<sup>31</sup>

Because his health had suffered due to poor prison conditions, he found the military training extremely difficult. Guðmundur was also a victim of ridicule and scorn for his religious beliefs. His health worsened, and he was placed in a hospital. After a rigorous period of over thirteen months in the military, he was finally discharged for poor health but not before he had preached the gospel to hospital roommates and had converted a corporal.<sup>32</sup>

Concerning his release, Guðmundur wrote:

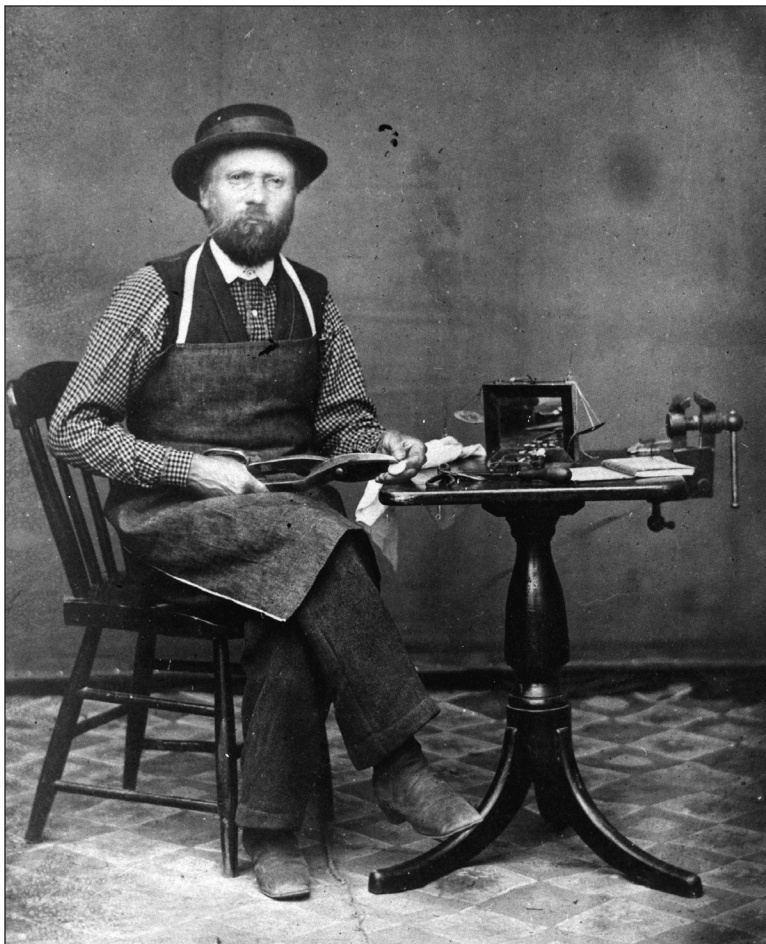
When I had been there [the hospital] for a long time, it was determined that I should be presented for the physicians and the General of the Battalion, that they might judge whether I was fit for the service or not; this happened the very day, when the Emigration was going to have a Conference before their journey to Zion. . . . They examined my breast with their instruments, and declared, that I, on account of weakness in the lungs was unfit for military service. They then gave me a passport and my own clothes, and I came to the Conference, to the astonishment of Every one, and I myself was astonished, because I knew that my lungs were as healthful as they could be. I knew it was the work of the Lord. . . . It was proposed, that I should go to Zion, . . . and I am now here, and it is just here as I want to be.<sup>33</sup>





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Guðmundur Guðmundsson goldsmithing while living in Utah.  
*Courtesy of the Geslison family*





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### *Journey to America*

Guðmundur joined an LDS company of 522 souls who gathered in Liverpool to cross the Atlantic on a sailing vessel called the *Westmoreland*. Also aboard was the Niels Garff family from Sjaelland, whom Guðmundur had taught the gospel. Niels and his wife Marie,<sup>34</sup> who had been baptized March 31, 1855, had embarked from Copenhagen with their three sons and one daughter.<sup>35</sup>

Concerning the journey to Zion, Guðmundur supplies few details. He noted simply, “Emigrated for America April 18, & arrived in the [Salt Lake] Valley Sep. 13, 1857.”<sup>36</sup> In order to pay for his passage, Guðmundur evidently worked as a cook on the ship,<sup>37</sup> but little else is known about his maritime immigration experience. After disembarking at Philadelphia, Guðmundur and the Garff family traveled to Iowa City, Iowa, which was the designated migration route during 1857. They then traveled on to Florence, Nebraska, where they joined the handcart company of Christian Christensen. While crossing the plains, sickness devastated the Garff family when Niels Garff and his daughter died. However, just before his death, Niels made Guðmundur promise to take care of his family. Guðmundur promised, and



Marie Garff, wife of  
Guðmundur Guðmundsson.  
*Courtesy of the L. Tom Perry  
Special Collections, Harold B.  
Lee Library, Brigham Young  
University, Provo, Utah,  
“Guðmundur Gumundsson,”  
compiled by Lavon Brunt  
Eyring, 1984*







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true to his word, shortly after their arrival in Salt Lake City, he married Marie Garff on October 4, 1857.<sup>38</sup>

### *Notes*

1. The front page of the book *The Life History of Gudmundur Gudmundsson*, compiled by Lavon Brunt Eyring (n.p., 1984), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, hereafter cited as *Life History*, notes that “Gudmundur Gudmundsson changed his name to Gudmund Gudmundsen after arriving in Utah.” He is also referred to in other accounts by the first name Gudmund; others use the surname Gudmundson. The writer, recognizing these variables, has chosen to use his proper Icelandic name of Guðmundur Guðmundsson.

2. This information, derived from the Oddi Parrish records, was provided by Sigríður Sigurðardóttir and Valgeir Sigurðsson, who are native Icelanders.

3. Guðmundur Guðmundsson, “Autobiography of Gudmund Gudmundsson,” holograph, microfilm, [1], Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter cited as Church Archives. See also Andrew Jenson, “Gudmund Gudmundson,” *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 3:639. Shortly before his death, Guðmundur wrote, “I had eleven siblings, of which two died in their early years. I was the youngest son. My parents were honest and godfearing people, hospitable and kind-hearted as much as they were able despite not being rich” (“Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” *Morgenstjernen*, September 15, 1884, 278, translated from Danish by a research assistant, Timothy Keller).

4. Lavon Brunt Eyring, comp., “Gudmundur’s Life and Young History,” chap. 1 in *Life History*, 6. Apparently Eyring estimated







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Guðmundur's birth date was March 23, 1825, as it occurs in the Copenhagen Branch records (Church Archives) under this date. However, as previously noted, Guðmundur was born on March 10, 1825, and his baptism into the Lutheran Church was on March 23, 1825. Reverend Sigfús M. Johnsen, "Þórarinn Hafliðason: fyrsti mormónatrúboðinn í Vestmannaeyjum," 21 *Blik* (1960): 114 (trans. George Tate, chair of the Humanities Department at BYU), notes that Þórarinn was also born on March 10, 1825, which would make Þórarinn and Guðmundur exactly the same age.

5. Oddi Parrish records provided by Sigríður Sigurðardóttir and Valgeir Sigurðsson.

6. Johnsen, 21 *Blik* (1960): 114.

7. Eyring, *Life History*, 4–5. Johnsen, 21 *Blik* (1960: 113), notes that Halldór Þórason was the son-in-law of Magnús Árnasson.

8. "Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien," *Morgenstjernen*, September 15, 1884, 278, trans. Timothy Keller.

9. Erastus Snow was called at the October conference of 1849 to preside over the Scandinavian Mission. See Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:103–15, for a bibliographic sketch of his life.

10. "Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien," *Morgenstjernen*, September 15, 1884, 279. Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 3:639, quotes Guðmundur stating, "I was baptized in the most devoted sincerity and repentance Feb. 15, 1851 by Peter O. Hansen." It appears that Guðmundsson may have been a bit confused as to who performed which ordinance when he provided his reminiscences to the *Morgenstjernen* shortly before his death as noted above. This is evidenced by the fact that the Copenhagen Branch membership records, Church Archives, reveal that Guðmundur was baptized on February 15, 1851, by Peter O. Hansen and confirmed by Christian Christiansen the same day.





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On the issue of his conversion, Eyring, *Life History*, 7, indicates that while Guðmundur was taking an evening stroll in the spring of 1850, he saw a group of people listening to a preacher at a street corner. Before he came within range of the preacher's call, Guðmundur heard an inner voice say, "What that man is saying is true, listen to him." The preacher was a Latter-day Saint elder, Peter O. Hansen. This suggests that Guðmundsson's conversion came about through a series of events.

11. Eyring, *Life History*, 5–6.

12. The "Manuscript History of the Scandinavian Mission," vol. 8, 1850–55, July 10, 1851, Church Archives (hereafter cited as "Scandinavian Mission"), notes that Þórarinn was ordained a priest on March 10, 1851. It also indicates that on April 18, 1851, Guðmundur was ordained a teacher.

13. "Scandinavian Mission," July 10, 1851. According to La Nora Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah* (unpublished document in author's possession, 1988), 8, the third convert was Jón Jóhannesson, who had also come to Denmark to learn the art of goldsmithing. It is not known why he was not sent forth as a missionary, and little is known of his life in the Church. Allred, *Icelanders*, 9, suggests that he probably moved to Keflavík and notes that it is not known whether he kept his religious faith. Jón Gíslason, "Endurnýjun í vatni og hugsjónum nýrrar aldar. Nýr forustumaður Mormóna kemur til Vestmannaeyja," in part 6 of *Sögur og Sagnir*, 11 (trans. Byron Geslison and Darron Allred), notes that this third convert (Jón Jóhannesson) had indeed moved to Keflavík and was apparently working for a merchant named Duus. Apparently, the missionaries used a portion of the Book of Mormon which had been translated into Danish by Peter O. Hansen, but may not have been quite finished by the time of their departure for the Westmann Islands (see *Millennial Star*, March 15, 1851, 88). The "popular pamphlet" they used was "En Sandheds Rost" ("A Voice of Truth"), printed in Copenhagen in October 1850.





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Peter O. Hansen had translated the pamphlet into Danish from the English version written by Erastus Snow (see “Scandinavian Mission,” October 4, 1850). Magnús Bjarnasson, who had lived with Þórarinn Hafliðason for a year before he went to Copenhagen, stated that Þórarinn “came to my house, introduced a conversation about religion, and presenting [presented] me with a little pamphlet entitled ‘En Sandheds Rost.’ He also gave copies of the pamphlet to a number of other inhabitant[s] who were willing to receive them. As soon as I had read the little pamphlet, I believed in the doctrines it advocated and prayed to the Lord to give me an understanding about the truth. In the course of a month’s time I was converted to ‘Mormonism’” (see “Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission [1851–1914],” 1854, Church Archives [hereafter cited as “Icelandic Mission”]).

14. Andrew Jenson, *Deseret Semiweekly News*, September 25, 1911, 9.

15. Andrew Jenson, “Gudmund Gudmundson,” *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 3:639.

16. Jenson, *Deseret Semiweekly News*, September 25, 1911, 9.

17. Memoirs of Guðmundur Guðmundsson in “Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” *Morgenstjernen*, September 15, 1884, 280.

18. The original letter is housed in the National Archives of Iceland in Reykjavík. A copy of it in Icelandic was provided by Björk Ingimundardóttir, an archivist there. It was translated by Darron Allred.

19. Gíslason, *Sögur og Sagnir*, trans. Byron Geslison and Darron Allred, 11. Jón Gíslason also notes that Guðmundur was living with Loftur Jónsson at this time and that Jónsson had probably first heard from Þórarinn about the Church and the arrival of Guðmundur. Kate B. Carter, comp., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 7:492–93, notes that Loftur joined the LDS Church, immigrated to Spanish Fork in 1857, and





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returned to serve a mission to Iceland in 1873. Loftur was later killed in an accident on September 9, 1874, in Palmyra, Utah.

20. Memoirs of Þórður Diðriksson in “Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” *Morgenstjernen*, September 15, 1884, 282, trans. Timothy Keller. This article (p. 284) also evidences that Þórður converted and was baptized by Loftur Jónsson on February 17, 1855. At the close of the year he left Iceland for Utah.

21. Elder John Thorgeirson, “Scandinavian Mission,” April 1851, indicates that the baptism of this couple led to the charge for the missionaries to no longer proselytize; however, in “The First Icelandic Settlement in America,” comp. Kate B. Carter, 7:492–93, Carter notes that Benedikt and Ragnhildur immigrated to Copenhagen and were then baptized on December 10, 1852. In any case, it appears that it was their conversion which sparked the opposition. Carter further notes that the Hansson family immigrated to America in 1859, but Benedikt died in Omaha, Nebraska, and thus Ragnhildur was left to continue her journey with her two children (Ephraim and Mary), arriving in Utah in 1862. After remaining in Salt Lake City for a time, the Hansson family moved to Spanish Fork and joined the community of other Icelandic Saints who had previously gathered. The Vestmannaeyjar [Westmann Islands] Parish registers substantiate the fact that they emigrated from the Westmann Islands to Copenhagen in 1852 and further note that Benedikt was thirty-five years old and Ragnhildur thirty-seven years old at the time of their emigration (see Index to Persons Emigrating From Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland, to Copenhagen, Utah, Hafnarford, Reykjavík, Seydisfjordur, and America, from 1823–1913, extracted by John Y. Bearnson from Registers GS #12712, parts 1 and 2, GS #12594, parts 1 and 2 for the Genealogical Society, located in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1970), 13, 30.

22. “Scandinavian Mission,” April 1851; “Icelandic Mission,” 1854.





## CHAPTER 2: THE RESTORED GOSPEL COMES TO ICELAND

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23. In “Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” *Morgenstjernen* 3, no. 18 (September 15, 1884), 280, Guðmundsson recalls, “Thorarin and four or five others drowned as they were out fishing on a little boat we called in Icelandic ‘Jul’ Christmas. A terrible storm arose and the little boat was engulfed by the sea’s frightfully large waves, and every soul perished. Brother Thorarin had married a young and capable girl which became a bitter enemy of ‘Mormonism’ and uttered many threats towards her husband. Among other things, I remember that she had taken Brother Erastus Snow’s portrait . . . and in her anger had cast it out into the seas, as she imagined it was a graven image that her husband worshipped. It is a misunderstanding when someone says that our friend Thorarin died as an apostate. . . . Quite the contrary, he died firm in the faith. . . . But he had a hard fight because of his young wife, . . . along with the priest and the mother-in-law a bitter hater of our teachings.”

24. “Scandinavian Mission,” April 1851.

25. “Scandinavian Mission,” April 1851.

26. “Scandinavian Mission,” April 10, 1851. Three days after the conference adjourned, President Willard Snow wrote in a letter that he had previously appointed Elder John F. F. Dorius on a mission to Iceland during the previous conference in Copenhagen, but Dorius had been imprisoned in Norway along with several other elders. Therefore, Snow had appointed Lorentzen to preside over the Icelandic Mission and recommended that he sail to Iceland as soon as “navigation open[ed] up the way” (see “The Scandinavian Mission,” *Millennial Star*, May 14, 1853, 313).

27. Jenson, *Deseret Semiweekly News*, September 25, 1911, 9.

28. Jenson, *Deseret Semiweekly News*, September 25, 1911, 9; Eyring, *Life History*, 64.

29. According to the Vestmannaeyjar [Westmann Island] Parish Records, Guðmundur left the Westmann Islands for Copenhagen in 1854 (see Index to Persons Emigrating From Vestmannaeyjar,





## *Fire on Ice*

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Iceland to Copenhagen, Utah, Hafnarford, Reykjavík, Seydisfjordur, and America, from 1823–1913, extracted by John Y. Bearnson from Registers GS #12712, parts 1 and 2, GS #12594, parts 1 and 2 for the Genealogical Society, located in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1970), 11.

30. Guðmundsson, “Autobiography,” [2].

31. Guðmundsson, “Autobiography,” [3].

32. Guðmundsson, “Autobiography,” [3–4]; see also Eyring, *Life History*, 67–68; and Rachel Minne Garff, *Peter Niels Garff* (Murray, UT: The Family of George Peter and Tyrphena Garff, 1983), 14–15; copy in possession of Ralph A. Trane.

33. Guðmundsson, “Autobiography,” [4–5]; see also Garff, *Peter Niels Garff*, 15.

34. Marie Garff is sometimes referred to as Mary or Maria in sources used for this chapter.

35. Louis Garff, “Reminiscences of Louis Garff,” 58, holograph, microfilm, Church Archives. The ship manifest shows that the Garff family were among the 522 passengers on this spring voyage of the Westmoreland from Liverpool to Philadelphia. Niels is listed on the customs list as forty-six years old, and Marie is listed as thirty-six. The names of their children are also listed (see “Report or Manifest of All the Passengers Taken on Board the Ship Westmoreland,” Balch Institute, Philadelphia, PA; copy in the possession of the author).

36. Guðmundsson, “Autobiography,” [1].

37. Eyring, *Life History*, 77; *The Mormon*, May 23, 1857, 3, in Journal History of the Church, April 25, 1857, Church Archives, microfilm copy in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

38. Fred E. Woods, “Fire on Ice: The Conversion and Life of Guðmundur Guðmundsson,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 39, no. 2 (2000): 65. This article (pp. 57–72) also provides highlights of the rest of the life of Guðmundur.

